THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) A total of nineteen States have so far set up Forest Development Agencies in their territorial/wildlife divisions. The remaining State Governments have been requested by the Central Government for expeditious setting up of Forest Development Agencies in their respective States.

Deterioration in air quality

4617. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ambient air quality has deteriorated all over the country, especially in urban and semi-urban areas;

(b) if so, the magnitude of this deterioration; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to solve the problem?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The ambient air quality is monitored regularly through a network of monitoring stations under the National Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Programme. The annual averages of criteria air pollutants in major cities were found by and large below their prescribed limits in case of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. However, the ambient levels of suspended particulate matter were found more than the prescribed standards in most of the areas of major cities mainly due to vehicular emissions, industrial activities, geographical and meteorological conditions.

(c) The steps taken by Government to control air pollution include the following:

(1) Emission standards have been notified under the Environmental Protection Act, 1986.

(2) Industries have been directed to instal necessary pollution control equipment before commissioning their plants.

(3) Industries are required to take consents from the respective State Pollution Control Boards under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 as amended in 1987.

(4) Emission standards for on-road vehicles and mass emission standards for new vehicles have been notified under the

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and are enforced by the Transport Departments of the State Governments.

(5) Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) is supplied for automobiles through a number of retail outlets in Delhi and Mumbai to cater to the CNG fitted vehicles.

(6) Unleaded petrol is supplied in the entire country from 1.2.2000 and diesel with 0.25% sulphur maximum content is supplied from 1.1.2000 in the entire country. Low sulphur (0.05%) fuel (petrol and diesel) has also been introduced in Delhi.

(7) Optimization of traffic and improvement in traffic management system.

Meeting of NRCP

4618. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a meeting of the National River Conservation Plan was held recently in Delhi which Ministers from different States also participated;

(b) if so, what are the details of decisions taken at the meeting; and

(c) how much funds are likely to be released by Central Government during the current year for river cleaning schemes?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A meeting of National River Conservation Authority was held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister on 13.3.2001 wherein the following resolutions were adopted:

1. While river cleaning would need to be given a much higher priority, it is also essential that resources are not spread thinly. The focus, therefore, has to be on large towns, which are gross polluters.
2. In case of works already completed assets need to be maintained and also continuously operated/utilized for which